UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/CONF.157/PC/42/Add.2
20 April 1993

Original: ENGLISH

WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Preparatory Committee
Fourth session
Geneva, 19-30 April 1993
Agenda item 6

REPORT ON OTHER MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Contribution by UNICEF

The attention of the Preparatory Committee is drawn to the attached statement to the World Conference on Human Rights adopted by the Consultation on the Role of the United Nations and Non-governmental organizations in the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which took place in New York on 24 March 1993. The purpose of the Consultation was to increase understanding about the ways in which the agencies and offices of the United Nations and NGOs can work together for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The recommendations of the Consultation fall under objective 1 of the objectives of the World Conference set forth in General Assembly resolution 45/155.

GE.93-12914

STATEMENT TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

FROM THE SATELLITE MEETING:
THE CONSULTATION ON THE ROLE OF THE U.N. AND NGOs
IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

CONVENED BY
THE U.N. CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, UNICEF, AND
THE WORKING GROUP ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD OF THE
NGO COMMITTEE ON UNICEF

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I. Introduction

1. The Consultation was co-sponsored by the U.N. Centre for Human Rights, UNICEF and the NGO Committee on UNICEF's Working Group on the Rights of the Child. It took place at Henry Labouisse Hall, UNICEF House, New York on 24 March 1993.

2. Purpose of the Consultation

The Consultation's purpose was to increase understanding about the ways in which the agencies and offices of the United Nations (U.N.) and NGOs can work together for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Consultation followed the unprecedented speed with which the Convention had been ratified by over 131 countries, and focused on all facets of implementation so as to accelerate the improvement of conditions of children throughout the global community.

3. The focus on implementation began with consideration of the work of the U.N. agencies, some of which are already engaged in implementation and in periodic inter-agency reviews of their work in this area. The Consultation was designated as an official satellite meeting for the World Conference on Human Rights by the Secretariat of the Conference.

4. Goals

a. To strengthen the capacity of NGOs to support implementation of the Convention, by meeting an essential current need for increasing the knowledge of the wider NGO community about post-ratification developments in policies and programmes related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
b. To identify current NGO and U. N. agency activities that contribute to implementation and to assess the potential for such activities.
c. To assess the possible role of NGOs in this process and to compile specific examples of ways in which the monitoring role can be enhanced.
d. To propose ways in which the U.N. agencies and NGOs with special interest in children can more consistently help the wider NGO community to keep abreast of significant developments in relation to the Convention both within the U.N. and within the NGO community.

II. Organization of the Consultation

5. Representatives from FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, WHO, The World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, U. N. Regional

Commissions New York Liaison Office, and the U. N. Department of Humanitarian Affairs as well as 39 representatives of 37 NGOs attended the Consultation.

III. Statements

6. Mr. Terry Meersman, Vice President, NGO Committee on UNICEF, outlined the purposes and goals of the consultation as summarized in paragraph 2 and 3.

7. In his opening comments, Mr. James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, stressed that child rights advocacy and activism had moved from the sidelines to the mainstream, if not yet centre stage, in the blink of an historical eye, with a Convention that had already been ratified by more countries than any other U. N. human rights treaty. However, gross violations of human rights lead to the majority of the deaths of 35,000 children every day in developing countries. Most are preventable. Those concerned about this, and other aspects of the neglect of children, should see themselves as a "Truth Commission" to assure that such "silent emergencies" are not overshadowed by the deaths of 2,000 to 3,000 children a day. Must we keep on generating "loud emergencies" by neglecting the "silent" ones of today?

8. Mr. Grant proposed seven challenges for children's rights advocates.

i. *Pushing for universal ratification of the Convention by 1995;*
ii. *Ensuring that the spirit of the Convention and its provisions progressively work their way into policy and the legal codes and the institutional life of nations, and the everyday culture of individuals, families and communities;*
iii. *Encouraging submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child of serious and detailed reports by States Parties on implementation of the Convention, with significant input from NGOs;*
iv. *Bringing a more policy-coherent and operationally co-ordinated U.N. system in order to work more closely with the Committee to better support the efforts of Governments, while budgetary and staff limitations are borne in mind;*
v. *Monitoring and measuring implementation of the Convention in relation to specific indicators,* such as progress against the goals adopted at the World Summit for Children for the Year 2000 and the goals set out in the National Programmes of Action using disaggregated data to reveal any disparities;
vi. *Overcoming constraints to the rights of children to protection and participation that do not easily lend themselves to quantifiable goals:* How can the Convention's articles on children's rights to participation and freedom

of belief be used to strengthen and enrich democracy? How can the children's opinions receive a more central place in modern society? How can they be better protected in armed conflict? How can accountability be ensured?

vii. *Using children's rights as the cutting edge to overcome the readily avoidable effects of poverty,* such as preventable disease, illiteracy, malnutrition and lack of clean water and adequate sanitation over the balance of the decade to 2000.

9. Mr. Enayat Houshmand, Director, Implementation Branch, UN Centre for Human Rights, indicated that the Consultation, which the Centre for Human Rights viewed as an important and timely event, had been designated as a satellite meeting of the World Conference on Human Rights and that its conclusions and recommendations would be treated as an input into the preparatory process of the World Conference. He stressed that the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which was at the centre of the international community's efforts to translate the Convention's provisions into national law and practice, would need strong support and cooperation. The Committee had already made significant progress in delineating the modalities for its cooperation with the agencies and organizations referred to in article 45 of the Convention and in identifying the types of input that it hoped to receive from them. It had also highlighted the need for establishing, at the level of the Committee's pre-sessional working group, an informal advisory group on which the various agencies and organs concerned, as well as the non-governmental organizations, would be represented. Such a group could assist the Committee, in the spirit of article 45 of the Convention, in the performance of its tasks. Additionally, the Committee has taken decisions relating to such other important matters as: the need for information about implementation at the national level from varying sources; the elaboration of national programmes of action for the promotion and protection of children's rights; the need to develop national and/or regional coalitions of non-governmental organizations dealing with the rights of the child; and the provision of technical assistance and advice to States in connection with the preparation of national reports.

10. Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, Member, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in both his Keynote Address, and a briefing note, detailed the procedures of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The "challenges" expounded by UNICEF's Executive Director were a good beginning for what was now needed to translate the procedural success of adoption and ratification of the Convention into an active success regarding its implementation. Since there was no practical possibility for the Committee to monitor in detail the implementation of the Convention in each country it would be more accurate to say the Committee's function was to "monitor the monitoring".

11. In order to fulfill its function, the Committee needs information on questions, such as: To what extent are people in country made

aware of the Convention? Is the Convention translated into the language of the minorities? How is the Convention used within the educational curricula? Were NGOs involved in discussions on the implementation of the Convention? Do children have a channel to make their views known within the reporting system? Does ratification lead to revision of the national legal code to ensure compatibility with the Convention? Has the Convention legal standing in the Courts? Is there a children's ombudsman to monitor complaints? Is there a system to educate personnel involved with children in regard to children's rights?

12. Mr. Hammarberg stressed that in order for the Committee's work to effectively assist countries in improving conditions for children:

a. State reports should be made available to NGOs before Committee discussion.
b. NGOs should present their own reports to the Committee's attention in written form.
c. At least two NGOs should be present at the closed preparatory meetings of the Committee before the regular meeting, especially local NGOs from the State Party whose report is being examined.
d. Members of Parliament in a reporting country should follow up on the Committee's concluding observations.
e. The media should become involved in reporting the concluding observations to the local populace.
f. NGOs should assist in bringing to the Committee's attention urgent situations outside the set periodic reporting system.
g. NGOs should assist in bringing to the Committee's attention information on thematic problems. At the last session the study was on children in armed conflict; the next, in October, would be on economic exploitation of children, including child labour and child prostitution.
h. Norms should be established for protection of children in modern warfare. This should apply not only to governments but to other parties to a conflict.
i. There should be endorsement of a Protocol prohibiting child soldiers.
j. Donor countries should use the Convention as an instrument in their own negotiations. Within the Convention, in Article 4, as well as other Articles dealing with health, education, and disabled children, there are pointers to international assistance to help developing countries implement the Convention.
k. The coalition of international NGOs should be strengthened and ensured greater co-ordination in its work. It is particularly necessary to improve the relationship between international and local NGOs, since the Committee particularly needs local information.
l. National Committees for the Rights of the Child should be created.

m. Focal points should be created within the U.N. agencies for the Convention and its implementation.

n. UN policy papers setting out UN agency programmes in relation to the Convention, should be submitted to the Committee's preparatory meetings, not the public sessions.

o. All U.N. agencies should regularly provide input into the Committee's work and attend all its sessions.

p. UN agencies should clarify the technical assistance they have provided in respect to the Convention.

q. UN agencies should co-ordinate their activities in regard to the Convention.

IV. Recommendations

The participants at the Consultation on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the interest of ensuring that all the bodies in the international community, adopt programmes and policies that reflect implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, make the following recommendations:

1. That governments, donors, U.N. specialized agencies and other bodies, NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child encourage and promote greater dissemination of information about the Convention.

Governments should undertake nationwide campaigns for dissemination.

Governments should incorporate the Convention into school curricula at all grade levels.

NGOs should disseminate the Convention among their constituents.

U.N. agencies should offer support to governments for incorporating the Convention into education systems. This component should be taken into consideration in decisions concerning the funding of technical assistance in education programmes. UNESCO, in particular, should incorporate the Convention into all phases of its education projects and distribute extensively materials on children's rights.

U.N. agencies should make the Convention a part of all teacher training programmes they promote.

U.N. bookstores should carry copies of the Convention and related materials and such materials should be available during guided tours of the U.N.

2. That governments, donors, U.N. specialized agencies and other bodies, NGOs and Committee on the Rights of the Child seek out and listen to the views of children and youth about the circumstances under which they live and involve them in decision making.

Governments should create special mechanisms for allowing young people to be involved in the preparation and discussions about the country's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Governments should include child representatives in their national delegations to the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights or alternately, delegations should devise a mechanism for broad consultations with children before the World Conference.

NGOs should take the lead in insisting on the involvement of young people in the preparation of and discussions about country reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Special attention should be paid to gathering information from children

outside the mainstream, such as indigenous people, minority groups and the handicapped.

NGO Committees at the U.N. addressing youth issues should include young people.

UNESCO should sponsor seminars and research papers in order to develop baseline information on maturation levels in children taking into consideration cultural differences to serve as guidelines for their progressive involvement in decision making.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child should gather information directly from children and youth, with special attention to information from children outside the mainstream. *NGOs* should help the Committee on the Rights of the Child devise a mechanism to gather information directly from children and youth.

3. Governments, donors, U.N. specialized agencies and other bodies, NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child should address the problem of child soldiers and the related topic of peace education. All should be involved in meeting the long-term health and child development needs of child victims of war, abuse and other violence.

Governments should develop criteria for humanitarian aid flow during armed conflicts and not stop humanitarian aid.

Governments should consider how the arms trade affects children, especially considering the share of the national budget that goes to services for children versus the portion for military expenditures.

U.N. agencies should undertake a study for the purpose of developing criteria for humanitarian aid flow.

4. Governments, donors, U.N specialized agencies and other bodies, NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child should ensure that in implementing the Convention, children are not considered in isolation from their families and that measures to preserve families are incorporated into their efforts.

5. Governments, donors, U.N. specialized agencies and other bodies, NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child should take action to ensure that indigenous and local NGOs have access to expertise and support in order to enhance their ability to participate in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6. Governments, donors, U.N. specialized agencies and other bodies, NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child should make

every effort to enforce measures to give girls equal access to the same level and quality of services as boys by:

- Moving from awareness of the problem of gender disparity in education to the implementation of concrete actions to improve girls' access to education;

- Ensuring girls' equal access to food, health services and a more equitable distribution of the workload;

- Developing legislation and effecting changes in attitudes and practices at all levels of society regarding female genital mutilation from the point of view of the girl child's health and human rights;

- Developing indicators to measure gender disparity, and progress in improving the condition of girls.

7. Governments, donors, U.N. specialized agencies and other bodies and NGOs should contribute actively to the general discussion within the Committee on the Rights of the Child on October 4 on the subject of Economic Exploitation of Children.

That meeting offers an opportunity for analyzing this urgent matter and laying the foundation for coordinated international actions for the protection of economically exploited children.

8. Governments and NGOs should support the proposal by the Committee on the Rights of the Child that a major U.N. study be undertaken to improve the protection of children in armed conflict.

The study should include steps to strengthen international humanitarian law for children and allow access to children in emergency situations; and means of enforcement of the rights of the child in war-like situations, including situations when armed actors do not consider themselves formally bound by existing humanitarian standards. The study should focus on the root causes for conflict with an eye towards prevention.

The study should also include measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social re-integration of children victimized by armed conflict.

9. Governments, donors, U.N. specialized agencies and other bodies, NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child should incorporate the following actions into their efforts to monitor and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

o Analyze the disparity caused by differing emphases in national legal structures on the protection of property versus the protection of children.

o Review the implications of the Convention for the work of each of the ministries within a country so that children's rights are not seen as the concern only of ministries of youth, education or sports.

o Promote understanding of the Convention through other national and international events, such as conferences related to the 1994 Year of the Family and the 1995 World Summit on Social Development.

o Urge government bodies, U.N. agencies, NGOs and donors to direct resources towards the implementation of the Convention.

o Establish a focal point for the Convention within each government, U.N. agency and NGO to co-ordinate collaboration and communicate information.

o Foster the establishment and growth of regional coalitions for the Convention.

o Foster the growth of local NGO networks to monitor implementation of the Convention and encourage them to report their information to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

o Establish local and national registers for child abuse and neglect.

o Develop indicators to gauge improvements in hard-to-measure areas of children's rights in order to devise concrete goals for the year 2000.

o Develop clear lines of communication so that information and documentation from governments, agencies and the Committee on the Rights of the Child is available to all those concerned with the implementation of the Convention.